

Old Fort Niagara



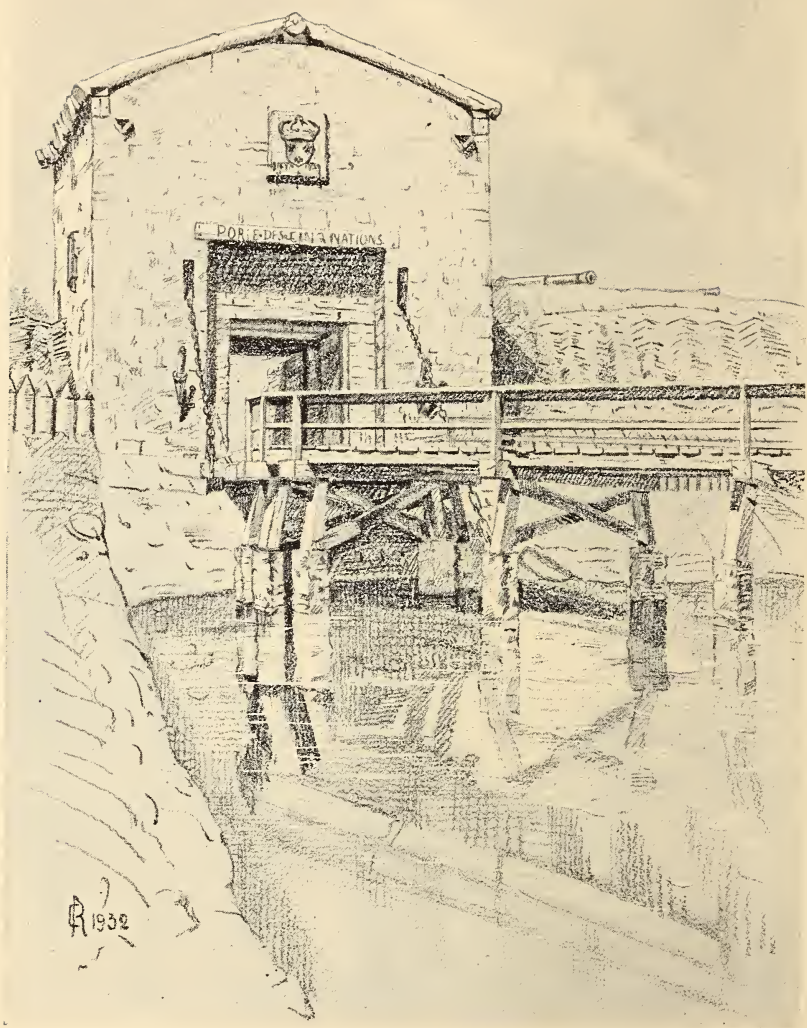
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Old
Fort Niagara





Pouchot's "Gate of the Five Nations"

Old Fort Niagara

*THE STORY OF AN
ANCIENT GATEWAY TO THE WEST*

by

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*Illustrated with pencil sketches of Restored
Old Fort Niagara by CLARA RITTER*



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In the Beginning



ACCORDING to the Cherokee legend, after the animals, through the efforts of the humble little water-spider, had built up the earth and had come down from Galunlati beyond the arch, to live in the hills which in turn had been made by the great Buzzard, the father of all present buzzards, as he flew low over the soft mud and flapped his wings, digging out valleys and building up mountains; and after some-one, no one knows who, had tied the four cords at the cardinal points of this big flat earth to the rocky anchorage of the heavens, the problem of heating and lighting the world presented itself. The animals, therefore, put the sun above the earth and set it in a track to go every day across the island of the earth from east to west just overhead. It was too hot this way and Tisiskagili, the crawfish, had his shell scorched and burnt red so his meat was spoiled. Accordingly, the conjurors kept putting the sun one handbreadth higher until it ran on its track seven handbreadths above the earth. It still passes across this path today through the Seventh Heaven.

Through the dark ages from the origin of this Cherokee legend until Fort Niagara came into being, many things happened. Civilizations were developed and exterminated. Vast populations grew into being and perished. Rare cultures evolved and dissolved before we have any accurate historical record of life leading up to the beginning of the Old Fort.

Undoubtedly this ancient triangle, marking the stepping off place of an alluvial plain in the bottom of prehistoric Lake Ontario, was the rendezvous of copperskinned fishermen back in the days of Onguiara, the Attawandaronk Village just under the Niagara Escarpment; when old Fortress Kienuka, the House of Peace, sat upon the edge of the escarpment, and when 400 years ago Dekanawida, Mohawk Chieftain and Hiawatha, the prophet, set about to organize the Iroquois group into the greatest confederation of native Americans.

Iroquois League

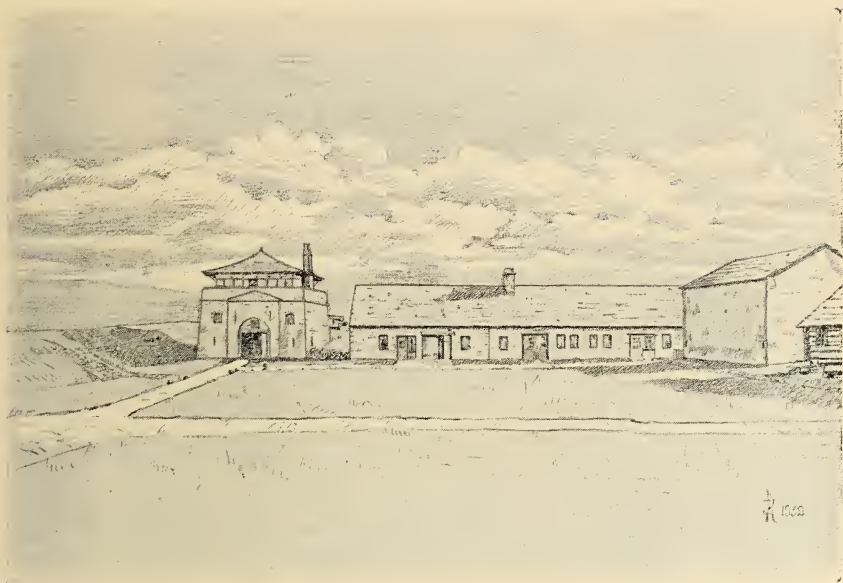
The story of Dekanawida, born of a mortal mother and a divine father according to Iroquois legend, and his disciple Hiawatha, is most entrancing. Hiawatha must not be confused with the legendary Chippewa God, Nanabozho, whose exploits have been immortalized by Longfellow under the name of "Hiawatha." The Iroquois Hiawatha was an Onondaga chief. The supreme compromise effected by Dekanawida and Hiawatha in bringing about unity between the nations is exemplary, and one of which our international diplomats today may take recognizance. It is said that the most bitter opponent Dekanawida and Hiawatha encountered was a powerful chief of the Onondagas called Atotarho or Wathatotarho, a man of great force of character, haughty, crafty, and remorseless, possessing Orenda (magic) of great power. Tradition describes him as a monster from whose head grew instead of human hair, great serpents whose terrible folds enveloped his body. By his strategy Atotarho prevented Hiawatha from addressing the Onondaga Council, of which he, Atotarho, was chief. By his magic arts he brought about the death of Hiawatha's seven daughters.

It was not until the tribes of the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Senecas and the Cayugas had joined the Confederacy that Atotarho and the Onondagas were won over; and their consent to enter the League was gained only by granting them unusual concessions. It was agreed that the Onondagas should be the leading nation of the Confederacy; that their chief town should be the Federation capital where the great council of the League should be held and where its records should be preserved; and that the Onondaga Nation should be represented in the Council by thirteen senators while no other nation had more than ten. It was further agreed that no act of the Federation Council to which the Onondagas objected should be valid. Furthermore, to enhance the personal dignity of Atotarho, five Federal chiefs were designated as his special aides.

Following are the three great double doctrines or principles upon which the Iroquois Confederacy was founded:

- (1) (a) Health of mind and body.
(b) Peace among individuals and groups of individuals.
- (2) (a) Righteousness in conduct; its advocacy in thought and speech.
(b) Equity in the adjustment of rights and obligations.
- (3) (a) Physical strength or power; order.
(b) Orenda, or magic power, of people and institutions.

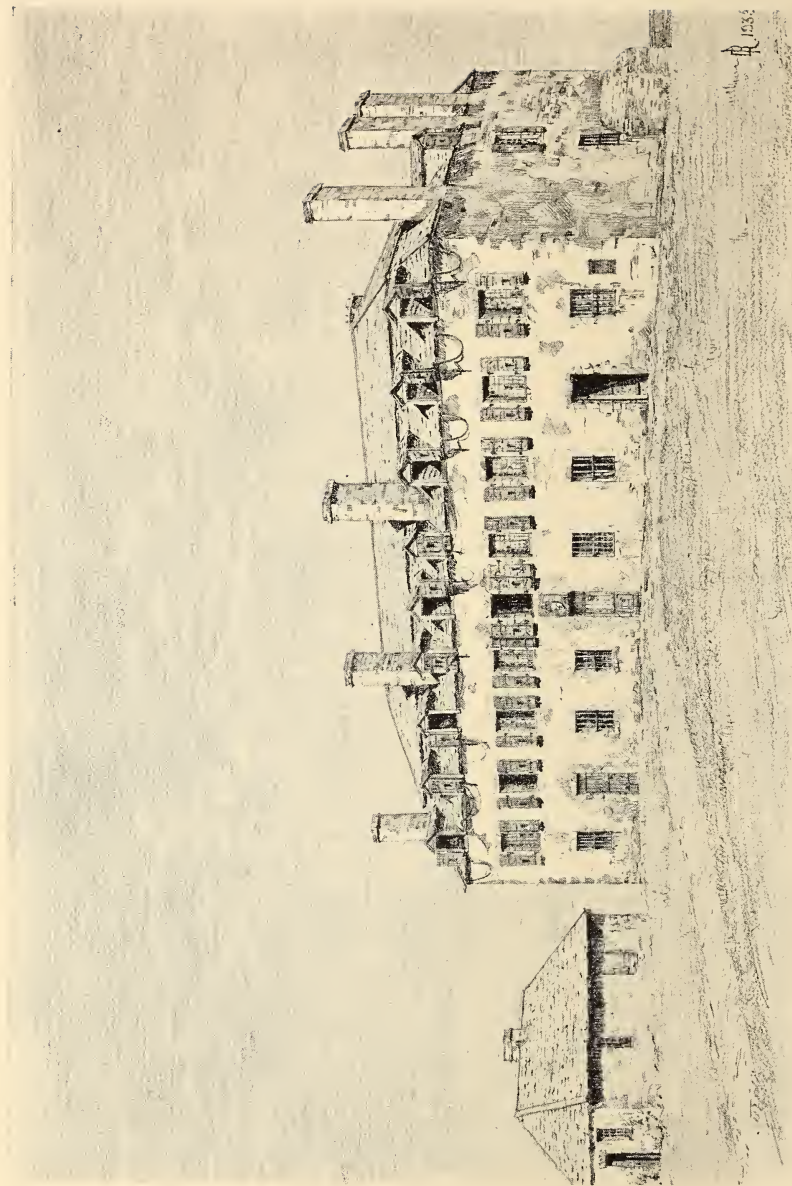
Based upon this code, Dekanawida and Hiawatha built a mighty politi-



Across the Ancient Parade

cal unit which had for its purpose its own preservation. It was complete in every phase according to the requirements of the stone age in which it took place. It was a model social order which evolved a culture in many ways superior to white man's culture of the day, according to many anthropologists. Its democratic form of government more nearly approached perfection than any that has been tried to date. It is claimed by many that the framers of the Constitution of the United States of America copied from these Iroquois practices in founding the Government of the United States.

The essence of the great experiment of Dekanawida and Hiawatha lies not in the fact that their League was based upon such ideal doctrines, but rather in the fact that over a period of 400 years that form of government and social order worked successfully, the five great nations of the Iroquois living over all that period in harmony and accord, banded together for internal preservation and external strife. It was this formidable organization of civil government planned upon such a firm foundation with which the French and the British and the early Americans were to contend in the winning of a new land.



Wm. R. 1854

deLery's "Castle"

Bearers of the Cross



THE story of Old Fort Niagara essentially is the story of the conquests and the conflicts of four of the world's greatest nations, the Iroquois Confederacy, France, England and the United States. The story is replete with the throbbing ambitions, the kindly gentleness, the awful tragedies, the great glory of the men and women who served these nations. Histories of nations are the biographies of their people. The cumulative biographies of the people who served their respective countries directly or indirectly through Old Fort Niagara, provide a most romantic story through periods of struggle and strife to the world's most exemplary lasting peace.

Fired with the zest of new opportunity of expression, keyed with the imagination and romance of things spiritual, the bearers of the Cross were the first to press onward to Niagara.

It is difficult in this day and age to picture the Niagara Frontier region of the early 17th century, a vast wilderness upon which no white man had placed foot and yet an age-old rendezvous of the Iroquois-Huron Indians.

Some historians give credence to the story that Etienne Brul , interpreter to Champlain, crossed the Niagara in September, 1615, while on a trip from Lake Simcoe, Ontario, to visit the Andaste Indians, who were located to the south on the Susquehanna River, thereby to become the first white man to visit the Niagara Frontier. However, the first accurate record of white man on Niagara soil is that of Father Joseph de la Roche Dallion, Franciscan priest of the Recollect form. Father Dallion had been in missionary service among the Hurons to the north, and also had been trading in the interest of France. He determined to carry his activities to the southward among the Attawandaronks or Neuter Indians, as they later were called by the French. The Attawandaronks at the time held the territory along the north shore of Lake Erie, and across the Niagara River with their most easterly boundary somewhere near the present site of the city of Lockport, N. Y. Their principal village was that of Onguiara, just beneath the Niagara escarpment on the site of Lewiston, N. Y. It is said that the name "Niagara" is derived from the Attawandaronk "Onguiara."

Niagara's First White Man

Dallion set out from the country of the Hurons, accompanied by two Frenchmen, Grinole and Havaleé, and tramped through the woods around the west end of Lake Ontario to the Niagara peninsula in the land of the Attawandaronks. He was well treated by the Indians, given venison, squash and parched corn. At first the Attawandaronks were in awe of the long flowing robes of the priest. Their curiosity in seeing such unusual garments perhaps was responsible for their favorable treatment of the strange visitor. Dallion told them he had come in behalf of the great empire of France to contract an alliance and friendship and to trade with them. Thus came about the first recorded trade of the Niagara region when Dallion presented the chiefs with "little knives and other trifles."

Father Dallion apparently made a very good impression among these Indians for they adopted him into their tribe and, as was a customary tradition, they immediately provided him with a father, it being a somewhat logical, if childlike, fancy of these Indians that adopted "children" of the tribe should have some parental influence. Father Dallion's acquired Attawandaronk parent was the Chief Souharissen.

From the Attawandaronks Father Dallion learned of a great river to the east which emptied into the lake. He journeyed in this direction until he reached the Iroquois Frontier; and so he established the date of 1626 as marking the first authentically recorded visit of a white man to the Niagara.

Soon, however, the Hurons, jealous of the Attawandaronks, turned against Father Dallion and spread the news that the priest was a maker of "bad magic" and that his "medicine" would ruin the Indian tribes. This resulted in the Attawandaronks mistreating Father Dallion almost to the extent of murdering him. News of this reached his friends at the Huron mission, and Grinole, who had returned to this post, set out in search of the adventurous missionary. He found Father Dallion and early in 1627 they returned to the Huron mission.

St. John de Brébeuf

From the time of Dallion's trip to the Attawandaronks there is no record of white man having visited this section until 1640. On November 2, of that year, Father Jean Brébeuf, now St. John de Brébeuf, and Father Joseph Chaumonot, two Jesuit priests, set out on the tiresome journey from a

Huron mission, resolved to carry the Cross to the Attawandaronks. They passed through what are now the towns of Beeton, Orangeville, Georgetown, Hamilton and St. Catharines, Ontario, and reached the Niagara River just north of the present site of Queenston, Ont. They had been deserted by their interpreter; Huron scandal had preceded them, the word having been passed that the missionaries were magicians and carried all manner of evils with them.

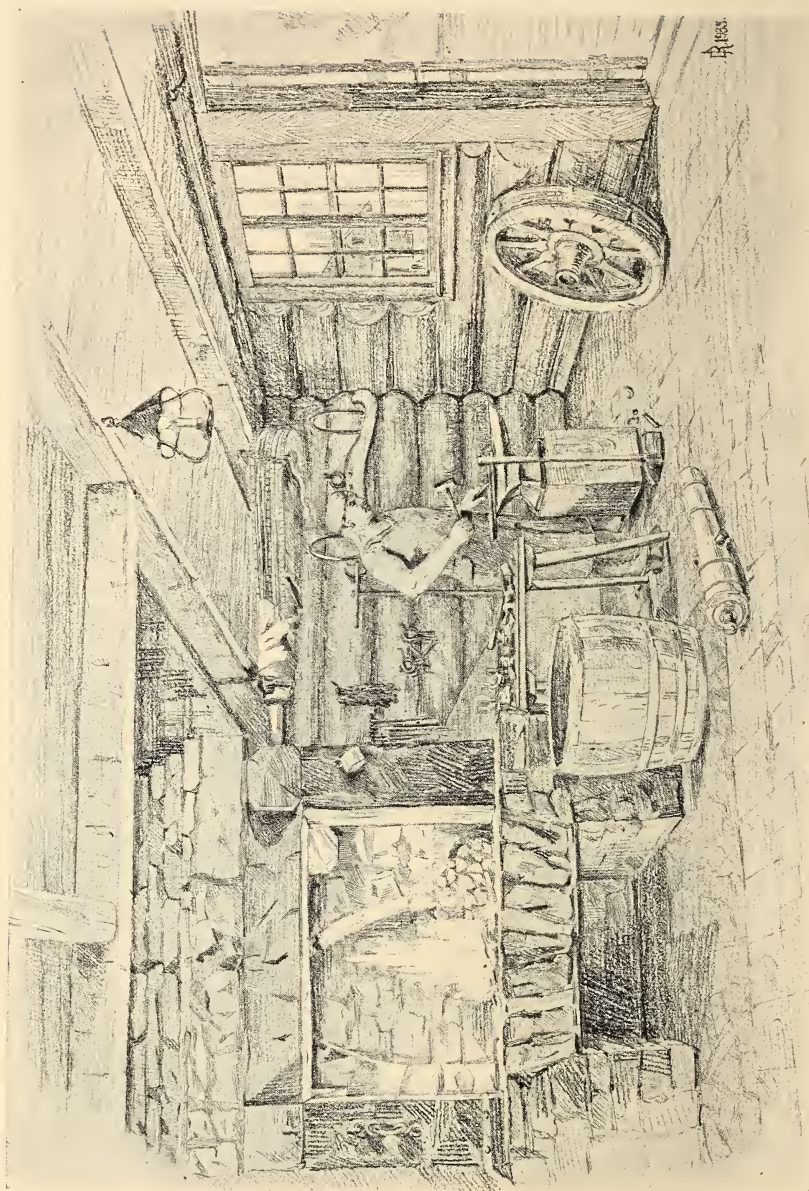
Weary and footsore, but grimly determined in their mission, Brébeuf and Chaumonot entered the hostile Attawandaronk Village of Onguara, set up their portable altar and proclaimed to the red men their mission of peace and good will. A new deity, presented in a strange tongue through equally strange men, did not meet with the approval of the Attawandaronks. Far into the winter they abused Brébeuf and Chaumonot. On one occasion, it is related, an Attawandaronk chief raised his tomahawk over Chaumonot with the announcement that he was tired of the dark meat of his Iroquois enemies, and that he would like to taste the white meat of the Frenchman. Brébeuf, of great physical stature, majestically calm, bearing that fine type of courage which appealed most to the Indian, managed to dissuade him.

Finally, by February, 1641, Father Brébeuf realized the fallacy of any attempts to convert the Attawandaronks and the two priests started out to retrace their steps toward Huronia.

Cold, half-starved, wading in deep snow, they tramped through the woods until they came to a cluster of bark lodges. Father Chaumonot, worn with travel and cold, took recourse in sleep, while Father Brébeuf, to escape for a time the acrid and pungent smoke that filled the cabin, went outside to commune with God; alone in prayer. He moved toward the margin of the woods. Suddenly he stopped as if transfixed. Far away to the northeast, high in the air, and boldly outlined, a huge cross was suspended. Was it stationary? No, it moved toward him from the land of the Iroquois. The saintly face lighted with unwonted splendor for he saw the vision which presaged a martyr's crown. Truly it did. Exactly eight years later the gallant priest was tortured to death at the stake at St. Ignace.

It was in the early part of the 20th century that the martyrdom of Brébeuf was recognized. He was beatified by the Holy See on June 2, 1925, and canonized on June 29, 1930.

The experiences of Dallion and Brébeuf and Chaumonot were the forerunners of the important parts played by the priesthood both at Fort Niagara and the territory which it served.



The Forge, Artificer's Cabin

Soldiers or Craftsmen



ABOUT one decade after Father Jean Brébeuf had left the Niagara Frontier in 1641, the Iroquois Indians spread devastation through the land of the Attawandaronks, practically annihilating that nation, and adopting its straggling remnants into their own tribes. Thus the Iroquois, particularly the Seneca tribe, became the holders of the Niagara Frontier. The Senecas had no permanent town in this section but apparently used it, particularly east of the River, as a rendezvous for war parties and fishing expeditions.

There is no record of white men having visited the frontier at the Niagara River between 1641 and 1669, when on July 6th Father François Dollier De Casson and Father René Bréhant de Galinée, Supitian missionaries, left Montreal for the west with nine canoes and equipment. With them was a young adventurer of Rouen, named René Robert Cavelier de La Salle. He was 26 years old. The party passed along the southern shore of Lake Ontario stopping at different places and meeting with many adventures, finally passing the mouth of the Niagara River. They continued on to the head of the lake and started overland, where they were met by Joliet. La Salle returned with Joliet to Montreal, while the missionaries continued on a westward journey.

René Robert Cavelier de La Salle

The story of La Salle, who has been called one of the greatest explorers of all time, is a long one. In whatever form written it is interesting because the simple facts of his experience are romantic almost beyond the imagination of writers of fiction. In fact, this story was written in historical novel form by Gilbert Parker in a most interesting book called "The Power and Glory, or the Romance of the Great La Salle." His life was fraught with hardships. Imbued with great ideals, possessed of a vision far beyond the comprehension of most of those with whom he had to deal, and bitterly opposed by some who should have been his greatest support, he carried on through a series of misfortunes which finally ended in death at the hands of his own companions somewhere in the valley of the lower Mississippi.

His vision and his work were not in vain, however, for his efforts to establish a commerce on the Great Lakes and to open up the waterway to the west brought the attention of the whole civilized world to this task.

La Salle's visit to the Niagara River in 1669 and subsequent studies made by him, brought to the young explorer his great vision of a new commerce to the westward and the building up of a vast empire for France. In May, 1675, the French Government granted him certain privileges. These concessions were so awarded that La Salle not only assumed the burden of carrying out the plan within the short period of five years, but it was a "privilege" granted him provided he assumed all expense attendant thereto. The odds were greatly against him. However, he had great faith in his purpose and perhaps too much faith in many of his followers. Among the few men who, throughout La Salle's explorations, remained steadfast to his interest, was his Lieutenant, Henri Tonti, often referred to as "the man with the iron hand."

This appellation was given Tonti because he in fact had an artificial right hand. It is said to have been during the siege of Messina in 1677 that his right hand was torn away by a grenade. Some writers declare that he received a sabre stroke on the wrist, was made prisoner and that he cut off the wounded hand with a knife without the services of a surgeon. Bacquille de la Potherie in his history published in 1722, speaking of Tonti's metal member, says in part: "The Indians greatly feared it. They called him the 'Iron-arm' (*bras-de-fer*); he often knocked their heads and teeth with a blow from the fist when he had difficulty (*démêlés*) with them. They did not know at first that he had this wrist of copper."

The First Ship

In 1678 from Fort Frontenac, La Salle started his adventure for the development of a fur trade to the west and south. First he sent a small group of men to the Upper Lakes with goods for trade and on November 18, 1678, he sent 16 men, ship carpenters, blacksmiths and other artisans to the Niagara to build a vessel above the Falls in which to continue his explorations. Under the command of *Sieur de la Motte* and accompanied by the missionary Father Louis Hennepin, they reached the mouth of the Niagara River on December 6th. On the 15th they sailed and towed their brigantine up the river to the present site of Lewiston and devoted the next three days to building a store house which they surrounded with palisades. This was the first building of the white man on the Niagara

River. La Motte, Hennepin and four French companions set out from the new store house on Christmas day, the same year, to visit the Seneca tribes 80 miles to the eastward and to obtain from them permission to build the ship. They were unsuccessful.

La Salle, who through the recent arrangement had charge of Fort Frontenac (the present site of Kingston, Ontario), with Tonti, set out for Niagara with supplies and materials to build the proposed vessel. On the way La Salle stopped at the Seneca Village and obtained permission to build his ship, despite the fact that La Motte and Hennepin had failed in this mission.

Disaster set in. Halfway between the mouth of the Genesee and the Niagara, La Salle and Tonti left the ship and proceeded overland, a more rapid mode of travel.

It was not enough, it seems, that the young explorer and his soldier friend with their handful of followers should be facing the difficult problem of building a ship in the enemy-infested wilderness. The crew which La Salle and Tonti left aboard the ship headed for the Niagara River, abandoned the vessel on a warm afternoon and left her anchored while they went ashore for a pleasant slumber. A storm tore her from her moorings and with all of the supplies, representing La Salle's fortune and what money he had been able to borrow, she pounded on a reef and went to the bottom of Lake Ontario.

Even as his brigantine sank in Lake Ontario, La Salle and Tonti crossed the mouth of the Niagara River and dined with friendly Indians at what is now Niagara-on-the-Lake. By midnight moonlight they journeyed up the trail to the cabin of La Motte and Father Hennepin. The following day La Salle left Tonti and explored the Upper River, locating the site upon which to build his new ship. It was on the east bank of the Niagara just south of Cayuga Creek, in the section of the city of Niagara Falls which now bears his name. At this time the young explorer had his first glimpse of the mighty Cataracts of Niagara.

Undismayed by the loss of his supplies, on January 22, 1679, La Salle with Tonti and Hennepin and his crew of artisans, began the work of building cabins and a chapel of logs and bark on the site of the shipyard.

It is not difficult to realize the hardship of living in hastily constructed and flimsy structures on the Niagara Frontier during the month of February.

Despite these hardships La Salle put the laying of the keel of the boat under way on January 26th and returned to Fort Frontenac for more supplies and finances.



Grim Ramparts that Served Three Nations

La Salle did not personally supervise the building of the *Griffon* (for this was the name of the ship), but left this to Tonti, who continued the construction throughout the winter and spring of 1679. A man by the name of Hillaret, according to some historians, was the chief craftsman.

Fortunately most of the Senecas in this district were absent on an expedition south of Lake Erie and only a few stayed around the shipyards. These latter, however, stood ready to plunder. An attempt is said to have been made to kill the blacksmith. The red intruder was repulsed by a red-hot iron bar in the hands of the smithy, this product of the forge apparently having been as effective as Tonti's iron hand. There also was a plan on the part of the Senecas to burn the boat but the plot is said to have been revealed by a Seneca woman who was a friend of one of the workmen.

The work was continued and the hull was launched in May. Tonti received orders to sail the *Griffon* through the Lakes and to notify the Illinois Indians that he was coming to live with them by the King's order. Tonti was unable to get the boat through the rapids at the outlet of Lake Erie and he brought her to anchor under the shelter of Squaw Island. La Salle returned to Niagara in August and found his boat ready to sail, but

was told that his men were unable to get her into the Lake. La Salle made them all debark, 30 persons including three Recollect missionaries, with arms, provision, merchandise and eight little cannon of cast iron or brass. Finally he reached the Lake by the aid of a strong wind and towing on the part of some of the men.

No one knows just how the *Griffon* looked. Tonti mentions it as a 40-ton ship. Father Hennepin refers to it once as a 45-ton and once as a 60-ton boat. At all events it was a sailing vessel and the first on the upper lakes. As far as it concerns the history of the Niagara Frontier it is sufficient to note that further disaster came to La Salle with the sinking of the *Griffon* while sailing the first mission of commerce on America's inland seas beyond Lake Ontario. Of ship or crew naught has been heard.

Fort Conti

Just how long ago that triangular point of land lying between Niagara River and Lake Ontario in the United States has been used for human habitation is unknown. Authorities declare that early reference to this site indicates it as a barren plateau and the supposition is that early camp fires of the Attawandaronks or perhaps their predecessors in this territory, caused this point to be barren of the heavy timber growth which marked the balance of the section.

The first recorded habitation on this point, however, was Fort Conti. The Prince of Conti was the one who had recommended Henri Tonti to La Salle, and it was in honor of the Prince that La Salle named this first habitation on the site of Old Fort Niagara.

La Salle had realized the importance of a building at the mouth of the Niagara River which not only would house merchandise brought by ship from Fort Frontenac for passage to the west over the portage, but that would be fortified against possible attack from the Senecas or other Indians, and would control for the French all Indian trade passing down the Niagara toward the English and Dutch in the east. So, after having started the building of the *Griffon* and while on his return trip to Frontenac afoot, he took Henri Tonti as far as the mouth of the Niagara and there traced the lines of the Fort. Tonti did not build the Fort. Actual construction was left to a force of men under Domenique de La Motte-Lussiere. On August 22, 1682, La Salle, at Fort Frontenac, wrote his supporters concerning this first fort at Niagara:

"The Iroquois did not oppose the construction of the Fort commenced at the discharge of Lake Erie (La Salle referred to the entire Niagara River as the discharge), but the loss of the first bark having obliged me to use most of my men during the whole winter for the transportation of what I had left from it, I contented myself with making there two redoubts, 40 feet square, upon a point, made of great timbers one upon another, musket proof and joined by a palisade, where I put a sergeant and several men, who during my absence allowed all this work to burn through negligence; and not being in condition to restore it, there remains only a magazine." And thus is found briefly in the words of La Salle, the history of the building, garrisoning and the destruction of the first fortification on the site of Old Fort Niagara.

Procès-Verbal

In reciting ever so briefly the history of René Robert Cavelier de La Salle and his followers, in so far as it concerns the Niagara Frontier, it is well at least hurriedly to scan the reports of their activities to the west and to the south. These are the explorations which mark the beginning of the vast western French Empire for which La Salle had planned from the start, and over which Niagara later was to rule.

As was previously noted, La Salle's adventures in the west consistently were fraught with disaster. Throughout these trying experiences, he was a giant of courage and a marvel of physical endurance. In one instance we find record of him having traveled more than 1,000 miles by canoe and on foot in 65 days.

From the time of the sailing of the *Griffon* in 1679, until the fall of 1683, the adventurer of Rouen was engaged in pushing westward and southward, claiming great stretches of country in the name of the King of France, and conducting a scattered and usually unprofitable trade with the red men.

To the westward La Salle and his followers had claimed the valley of the Illinois, the Mississippi and the territories adjacent to the Great Lakes; to the southward the lands of the Miamis. In 1682 La Salle reached the Arkansas and took formal possession by civil and religious ceremonies and the raising of a cross, the Procès-Verbal (customary proclamation of discovery). The following month similar ceremonies were held at the mouth of the Mississippi and La Salle named this new territory Louisiana.

It is singular that La Salle apparently never made any priority claims on the Niagara Frontier, nor in the north; though in 1669, the two priests

with whom he first visited the Niagara River, Galinée and de Casson, took formal possession on the north shore of Lake Erie, somewhere in the vicinity of Long Point.

Here and there over the great expanse of country included in La Salle's explorations, the pioneer and his men had built trading and supply posts. True, they were few and far between—so far between that communication was exceedingly difficult—but they represented a nucleus for that cordon of trading posts down the Ohio and the Mississippi and on the Lakes to the westward, to all of which later Fort Niagara was the key.

Thus La Salle's empire as he left it in the fall of 1683. The great explorer returned eastward at that time from having spent the winter on the Illinois fortifying Starved Rock. In the meantime, Count Frontenac, his staunch friend, had been recalled and La Barre had been made Governor of Canada. The new Governor, who was no friend to Robert Cavelier, confiscated the latter's property and so stood in his way that the gallant La Salle returned to France, never again to visit the Niagara Frontier.

Today La Salle's Empire has expanded and developed far beyond his fondest dream. In fact, La Salle in the 17th century could not possibly have visualized the great middle west of the 20th century.

Just to depart for the moment from the chronological relation of events as they slowly evolve to frame the destinies of the Niagara Frontier, to consider briefly the men whose thoughts and actions form the historical fact. What of the followers of La Salle? Brief reference has been made to Henri Tonti, his faithful lieutenant, and to Father Louis Hennepin, the priest and perhaps well-intentioned but sometimes exasperating historian. But what of the rank and file—and those between, the junior subalterns? Were they good men—or bad? They were both, as we measure virtue and corruption. A few were most honorable and loyal to their leader. Many of them turned out to be deserters and thieves.

Writing of the crew which sailed the *Griffon* into Lake Erie in 1679, one historian says: "It was a strangely mixed lot; a few gentlemen, soldiers who had proved themselves in service, missionary priests, craftsmen, mechanics and dubious habitants who only needed opportunity to turn villain. By no means least in evidence in the motley crew was Moyse Hillaret, ship carpenter. Another carpenter, Francois Sauvin, was called La Rose; a blacksmith, Le Meilleur, is oftener mentioned as La Forge; others were La Violette; Martin Chartier; Duplessis; Jacques Monjault; La Rousseliere; Baribault; Lacroix. Highly poetic, some of the names, but a more rascally and unfaithful crew never sailed."

The same historian has it that some of these men were afraid of the Indians, which might well be true. During the time that they were building the *Griffon* the Indians were none too friendly.

Hillaret, the carpenter, was a ring leader in agitation among the craftsmen on the ship. Father Hennepin writes that the man was on the point of deserting the shipyards and taking with him the balance of the carpenters into New York. The good priest in the same paragraph claims credit for having stayed the rebellion by appealing to the men during services.

There is no doubt that Father Hennepin and other priests held great influence over these men, as they were staunch in their religion. On the other hand, it took much more bravery to run away into the wilderness than it did to stick to camp and follow the crowd in those days.

"Among the more trusty who stood with La Salle as he sailed into Lake Erie," our historian further says, "was Jacques Bourdon, the Sieur Dauntray, son of Jean Bourdon, first procurer-general of Quebec; 'always very faithful', La Salle said of him." Others were Andre Henault; Collin, Michael Accault and Antoine Auguel; the Parisian, the Sieur de Boisrondet; La Chapelle; Noell Le Blanc; Pierre You; L'Esperance, La Salle's servant and a few Indians.

Perhaps this list of men will give a fair cross section of the types of early Frenchmen on the Niagara Frontier. They were of the many kinds who make up the world.

In La Salle's Footsteps

Adventure! Romance! Down through the pages of Niagara Frontier history there are few paragraphs more important, though many are more voluminous, than those which all too briefly tell the story of the youths of the late 17th century, who followed in the wake of the great La Salle, inspired by his daring and the possibilities of wealth and fame. Their aim perhaps was less to explore than to capitalize the opportunities to exchange with gullible red men worthless trinkets for valuable furs.

Young men in numbers entered into the fur trade without license or Government permits, greatly to the chagrin of authorized operators. In 1682 there was a serious outbreak of this nature. The Colonial Government found it most difficult to cope with their reckless, outlaw *coureur de bois*. The mouth of the Niagara River, though La Salle's Fort Conti several years previously had been destroyed by fire, was a point of rendezvous for the *coureur de bois* and the Indians.



Site of Fort de Nonville

La Barre, Governor of Canada, prompted by the request of Sieur de La Chesnaye, who had a large licensed fur trade, issued an order to the Iroquois, giving them permission to appropriate the goods and furs of French voyageurs whom they might encounter, unless the traders could show passports such as the sample which he sent to the Indians.

La Chesnaye suffered along with the unlicensed traders from this order, for some of his canoes, their occupants having mislaid or lost their passports, were seized by the Senecas. Though efforts were made to recover the goods, the Indians simply retorted that they were carrying out the Governor's orders.

Much of this sort of banditry took place on the Niagara. It was a point of vantage far too important to be overlooked by any who wished to have a share in the western fur trade. The result of this piracy was a series of conflicts between the white traders and the Iroquois. Little has been written of these minor engagements, but they were of sufficient importance to enrage the Indians, and, as one historian quotes a memoir of the time: "Behold, the first preliminary step to the cruel war which we have sustained in consequence, and which has even threatened the abandonment of the colony."

English Interest

While so far this sketchy relation of Niagara Frontier history has dealt with the French, we soon shall have to consider the English, and to some extent the Dutch, who in their trading posts down Lake Ontario and in lower New York, at this time began to realize the importance of the control of western fur trade through the Niagara.

"Description de la Louisiane"—the first and perhaps the most reliable work of Father Louis Hennepin—was published in a Paris printing shop in 1683. Its effect was to bring to the attention of the French and English, much more forcefully than ever before, the significance of the western colonial fur trade and incidentally the importance of Niagara.

Almost simultaneously, Dongan, the English Governor of New York, and René de Brassay, the Marquis de Nonville, Governor of New France, urged their respective home governments to fortify the Niagara. In the meantime, England and France had effected a treaty, signed at Whitehall, November 26, 1686, whereby they were pledged to maintain peace between their respective colonies in America, but whereby "neither should interfere with the other in his warfare upon 'wild Indians'."

Dongan the previous year set out to establish trade in the west, sending a detachment of traders through the Niagara route. These Englishmen, headed by Abel Marion la Fontaine, a deserter from the French colonies, were the first white men except the French to enter the Niagara River.

Fort de Nonville

With a loophole in the treaty clause concerning Indian warfare, de Nonville, having received authority from the French King to build a fort at Niagara, set out on his famous campaign against the Iroquois, his main objective being to build the post. Durantye, Tonti (La Salle's old faithful lieutenant) and Du Lhut, at de Nonville's orders, had gathered a large party of Indians and French habitants from the west. They met de Nonville's large forces on the south shore of Lake Ontario and proceeded to attack the Iroquois. The Indians were too wary for de Nonville and he succeeded only in stirring up and infuriating the red men. He did, however, destroy three villages and, it was reported, 1,200,000 bushels of corn. This destruction of property, especially the sacred corn, and killing of Iroquois, as shall be noted later, was to be regretted by de Nonville's men who were left to garrison the new fort at Niagara.

Having returned to the lake shore with his forces, de Nonville proceeded at once toward the mouth of the Niagara, arriving at that point at five o'clock in the morning, after a moonlight trip during the night of July 30, 1687. Of interest is the fact, according to de Tregay, lieutenant of the garrison, and its surviving Commanding Officer, that the Marquis was accompanied by his wife, who, therefore, undoubtedly was the first white woman to visit Fort Niagara.

Realizing, as had La Salle, the great strategy of the spot, de Nonville set about to build a fort on the same site on which the explorer's lieutenants had erected Fort Conti nine years before. The Marquis, "being not too modest," as some historians have reflected, named the fort de Nonville, after himself, although it was better known as the "Fort at Niagara."

Quoting from Peter A. Porter's book, "A Brief History of Fort Niagara": "Baron La Hontan was among the officers of de Nonville's command, and he describes the work as a 'fort of pales, with four bastions,' and says it 'stands on the south side of the Straits of Herrie (Erie) Lake, upon a Hill, at the foot of which that Lake falls into the Lake of Frontenac (Ontario)."

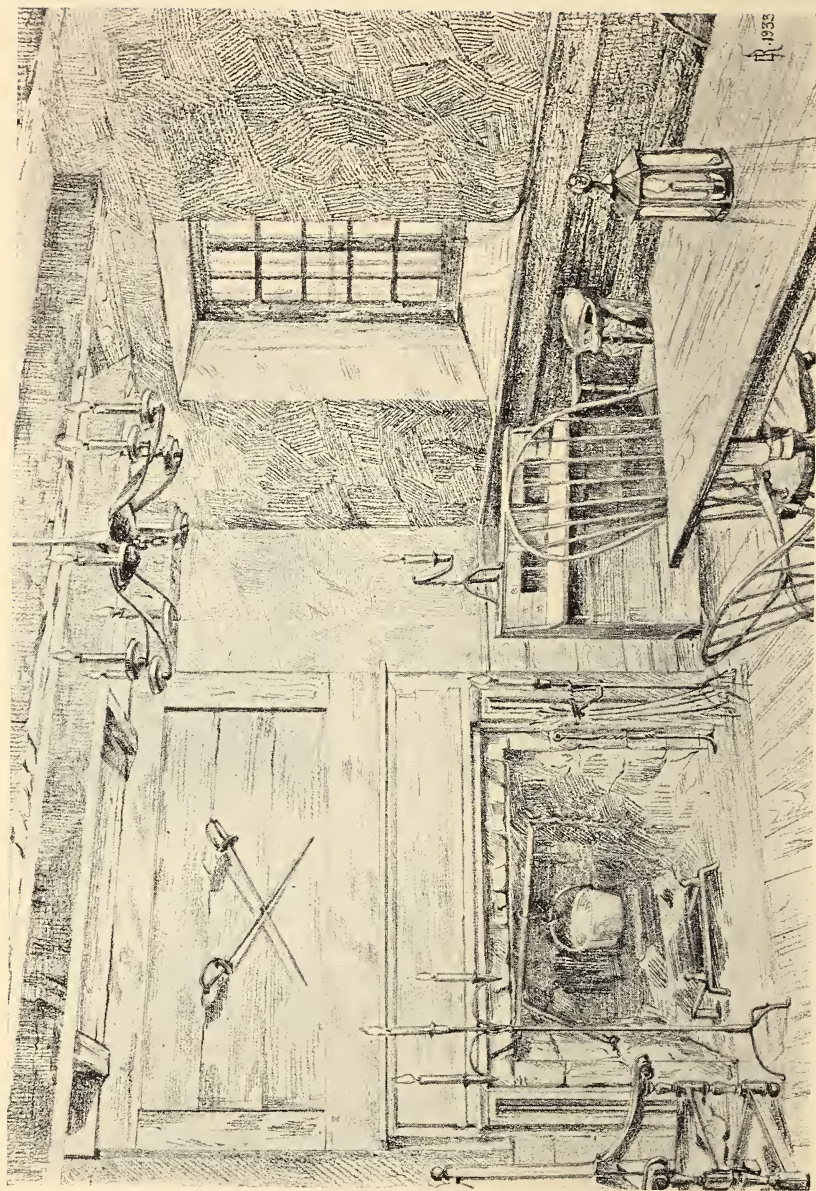
Winter of Starvation

To be ambushed by hostile Indians, robbed and perhaps murdered, was a common occurrence in the late 17th century among the traders and soldiers who took the risk of journeying westward to Niagara. To be lost in the wilderness and to face starvation was not unusual, but the saddest story in all the history of the Niagara Frontier is that of the Year of Starvation.

As the work of building de Nonville's fort neared completion, the Governor boarded his boats with the balance of his men and sailed for home, promising the garrison of one hundred left in command to bring them proper provisions for the winter.

An extract from the memoirs of Chevalier de Tregay, surviving Commanding Officer, most vividly tells the story of that terrible winter.

de Nonville's destruction of property among the Iroquois earlier in the summer had caused the Indians to be extremely hostile. Provisions ran low and the supply ship failed to appear. de Tregay tells of futile attempts of the men to take fish from the lake. They were all on the verge of starvation when a barque appeared on the horizon. The boat was becalmed for two days some leagues away from the mouth of the river, but finally was brought to port and unloaded. "It was not until her sails had fall'n below the horizon that we fairly had sight or smell of what she had aboard,"



Sir William Johnson's Council Chamber

de Tregay writes. In fact, the provisions proved to be ruined and the garrison of one hundred faced the winter with no food fit for human consumption, with hostile Indians on one side and water on the other, their fort a virtual prison. Scurvy and starvation set in.

de Tregay writes: "The wood choppers, one day, facing a storm, fell in the drifts just outside the gate; none durst go out to them. The second day the wolves found them—and we saw it all." Late in February sixty of the one hundred were dead. A few with stouter stomachs than the rest did all the duties of the post. de Tregay tells of how one morning he found the brave de Troues mumbling the name of one he loved as he joined the major portion of his garrison.

The winter wore on. Even hope of hope was abandoned. de Tregay was on the verge of delirium. He prepared to die and was sinking back upon the boards of his rough bunk in a state of coma. Suddenly he was brought to consciousness of a new presence and laboriously raising his head, beheld a huge Indian chief in all the glory of war paint and feathers. Convinced that the tomahawk was the lesser of the two fates confronting him, de Tregay slumped back upon his bunk, resigned to the quicker death.

The Indian, a warrior of the Miamis from the far-off valley of the Ohio, held forth his hand filled with parched corn and in his native tongue, spoke: "Eat."

A rescue was organized and effected on Good Friday, 1688. Twelve of the original garrison of one hundred were left.

On that same Good Friday, Rev. Father Pierre Millet, a member of the rescuing party, directed the erection of an eighteen foot cross in the center of the square formed by the outlines of Fort de Nonville. On the arms of the cross were inscribed in large letters the following abbreviations: "Regn. Vinc. Imp. Chrs." standing for "Regnat, Vincit, Imperat, Christus." Before the cross which he had erected in commemoration of the ill-fated members of de Nonville's garrison, Father Millet said a Mass and solemnly blessed the monument.

On the 15th of September, 1688, on the orders of the Marquis de Nonville, Governor and Lieutenant General for the King, Captain Sieur des Bergeres, Commanding Officer, Fort Niagara, and his detachment of marines, abandoned Fort de Nonville. de Nonville's orders to abandon were the result of a treaty between England and France.

We shall quote the following entirely from the pages of Volume I, "An Old Frontier of France," Buffalo Historical Society publication, No. 20, by the late Frank H. Severance, greatest of all Niagara Frontier historians.

"From the days of La Salle and de Nonville, down to the re-establishment of the French on the Niagara, the story of Lake Ontario appeals by its very meagerness to the imagination. Never wholly deserted by traders, it was, as has been seen, more than once the theater of scenes of violence and outlawry. The French, realizing more and more its splendid possibilities, sent into it good store of trading goods; and, at least until the temporary abandonment of Fort Frontenac, kept in commission one or two primitive brigantines, which skirted the forested shores, made port of call wherever barter could be had, and cruised without hindrance and with no mean seamanship these lonely wilderness waters. Wind and wave and seasons' changes, seemingly so fickle, were then as now; but the intrepid navigator of those distant years had little to rely on save his own resources and the Providence which attends the daring. There were no charts to show channel or reef, rock or shoal, save such as he might sketch from his own discoveries; no lights to warn or guide; no harbors even, save such as nature made; yet every glimpse we have of the life of old, shows the lake sailors of those days as a happy-go-lucky crew, who knew the ins and outs of Ontario's shores, rocky isles and tortuous channels, as no manner of men have known them since, and who bore into every bay and anchorage the white flag of the Bourbon Kings.

"Today, the leisured yachtsman making holiday, moors his shining craft in some pellucid cove. As evening falls, the lap of the wavelets at his vessel's side, the incense of his ruminative pipe, lull his soul into a receptive sense of sights and sounds unheeded in the bright and busy day. Dimly through the dusk, around the neighboring point he sees a strange-shaped vessel glide. He hears the creak of a gaff, the muffled clatter of lowering sails, calls and commands in a tongue half known, half strange; the splash of an anchor and the rhythm of a running chain. The August moon makes silhouette of a distant pine, the drowsy breeze brings refrain of some foolish, haunting melody of the old régime, of the days when the hardy sons of France, sailing these wilderness waters as their own, still like the children they were, sang the songs of Anjou, of Brittany or Lorraine. Lulled to the borderland of sleep, our summer sailor vows to seek at day-break the unknown craft—but with the first sunglint, his thought is for the morning plunge, the glorious swim; and like the vanishing wisps of mist, fades the memory of his brief and shadowy comradeship with the old-time voyageurs and sailors of the Ontario sea."

The Stone House



HUMBLE in office, as compared with many of the makers of early Niagara Frontier history, but the outstanding figure of that dark period between the evacuation of Fort de Nonville in 1688 and the building of Fort Niagara in 1726, was Louis Thomas de Joncaire, usually referred to as Chabert de Joncaire. Holding a minor commission in the French forces, he became associated with colonial struggles, probably by accompanying the Marines under Chevalier de Vaudriol on his trip to America in 1687.

Had it not been for Joncaire, no doubt the history of the Niagara region—yes, of half of the present United States—might have been vastly different. A volume devoted to his exploits, his unusually thrilling adventures, and his masterful diplomacy, would read most entertainingly.

At just what date his association with the Seneca Indians began is uncertain, though it dates back at least to 1701. Early in his colonial experience, he and several of his companions were captured by Senecas. Different writers tell the tale in varied detail. It seems apparent that a display of exceptional bravery in the face of threatened typical Indian death torture saved his life. With subsequent diplomacy, this characteristic served to insure a lifetime of friendship from the Indians. He was adopted into their tribes and raised to the high office of Sachem. This association meant more to France in her dealings with the Iroquois at Niagara than any other alliance in the history of French contest in America.

England and France at times during this period were at peace—at least technically—but at no time was there peace between the competing English and French traders on the Niagara and Lake Ontario. Both had long since visualized the importance of fortifying the river and thus controlling the fur trade. To the French, it was imperative to control Niagara for it was the only logical connecting link between their western cordon of forts and their eastern headquarters at Quebec and Montreal. The Iroquois, lying between two fires, leaned first one way and then another. It finally became possible for Joncaire, in 1720, through his friendship with the Senecas, to build on the present site of Lewiston, N. Y., a flimsy bark house which

marked the beginning of a new era of French control of the Portage.

This frail dwelling was enlarged to the proportions of a 30-foot by 40-foot store house, surrounded by a substantial stockade of vertical logs with pointed ends. Here the portage fur trade was practically controlled until 1725, when the French obtained permission from the Iroquois to build on the Niagara, a "stone house."

It is interesting to note that the resultant "stone house," now called the French "Castle" at Fort Niagara, is not of the conventional type of fortification for the period in which it was constructed. Perhaps there is a distinct reason for this. For many years the French had cherished the idea of building a fortification upon the strategic river. In 1725 the faithful Joncaire and his fellow diplomat, Lieutenant de Longueuil, obtained from the Senecas permission for the French to build on the river. In presenting this project to the Indians, the emissaries dared not to call the building a fort, persisting it was to be "a stone house for the purpose of storage."

Historians tell us that de Longueuil presented the plans of the building to the Indian chiefs. It may not be altogether unlikely, however, that as the emissaries related their plans for a stone building on the Niagara, that the wise old Indian chiefs, many of whom had visited Montreal and Quebec, demanded to see such plans. They knew well the appearance of the typical French fort and they also knew the lines of the typical French-Canadian abode house. Perhaps Joncaire and de Longueuil, at all costs determined to carry out the essential French plan of fortifying the Niagara, drew plans for the proposed building in the presence of the Indians. And, perhaps, realizing the Chieftains' knowledge of French architecture, they durst draw no other plans than those of the typical abode house. In any event, the Old Castle was built substantially on the plan of the French Provincial Chateau or home.

The French Provincial Government appropriated 29,295 livres, or approximately \$5,592.00 and appointed Gaspard Chaussegros de Lery to prosecute the work of building the "stone house." Along with the appropriation for the building of the new fort, was one covering the cost of two ships, to be built at Kingston for the purpose of carrying supplies and materials for building and to conduct the fur trade across the lake.

While de Longueuil had planned that the new fort at Niagara should be located in the vicinity of Joncaire's store house, the present site of Lewiston, de Lery soon determined that the greater vantage point, both from the angle of river and lake control, was on the ancient triangle, successively recognized as the most strategic by his predecessors La Salle and de Non-



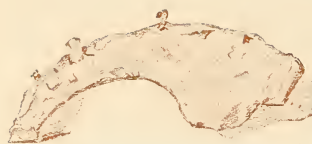
Artificer's Cabin

ville. He was upheld in this contention, even though he actually started the work on this site before having obtained authority to do so.

While de Lery's stone house retained an appearance in keeping with its design, it was a veritable fort; its walls four feet thick; huge stone arches to absorb the lateral sway that might be created by firing cannon from the top deck; its inside well as a precaution against siege; in fact, the finest fortress that had been built to date in the west.

What toil and engineering ingenuity was required to build so serviceable a structure in the wilderness Frontier of that time. Trim stone for doors and windows was shipped from Frontenac (now Kingston, Ont.) quarries; timber was cut and hauled from the surrounding countryside. The balance of the stone used was taken from the Niagara Escarpment, while the iron and other materials were shipped from Quebec and Montreal through Frontenac.

Three Flags



BETWEEN 1727 and 1758 there was much activity at Fort Niagara. The ever existing struggle between the French and English to control the frontier fur trade continued in spite of formal declaration of peace between the mother countries. For years the French had anticipated an English attack upon the fort. In preparation for this they sent a military engineer by the name of Captain François Pouchot, of the Regiment of Berne, who between 1750 and 1759 converted Fort Niagara from the old stone house, with a few temporary buildings, into an elaborate stronghold with its system of earthworks, moats, powder magazine and its complement of artillery batteries.

Inevitable assault by the English came in July, 1759. War had been declared between France and England in 1756.

For one hundred years the French and the English had been in a more or less constant state of war in America. The French holdings to the southwest, down the Allegheny, on the Monongahela and the Ohio into the Mississippi, and out the Great Lakes, under the plans of La Salle and his successors, covered the greater part of the middle west. Singularly, however, the one and only feasible connecting link between their western and southern territory and French headquarters in Canada, was the straits of Niagara (as the French called the Niagara River). No full rigged ship or tiny batteau could pass westward unless the guns of Old Fort Niagara gave consent. Even as it was the strongest link in the French chain, so it was the weakest, for in the hands of the enemy it became at once an unsurmountable blockade in communication between the nether ends of the French Empire in America.

English Take Niagara

These facts were voiced before the British Parliament by Sir William Pitt when he said that, second to the citadel in Quebec, Fort Niagara was the most important post in America "and must be taken at all costs."

As a result, orders were issued through General Amherst for General John Prideaux, with 2,200 regular British troops and militia, to proceed from Fort Stanwix (now Rome, N. Y.) by way of Fort Oswego (now Oswego, N. Y.) and Lake Ontario, to the capture of Fort Niagara. Between Stanwix and Oswego, Prideaux was joined by Sir William Johnson, British Commissioner of Indian Affairs, commanding 943 Iroquois warriors.

Early in July the large force landed at what is now called Four Mile Creek, approximately four miles east of the Fort and affording a small harbor. Entrenchments were made and preparations begun to lay siege to the French.

The Fort was still in command of Captain Pouchot, a gallant Frenchman, and garrisoned by 496 military men and 39 employees, five of whom were women and children.

Captain Pouchot refused to comply with General Prideaux's offer of "reasonable terms of surrender." There followed 18 days of siege, the English drawing ever closer and entrenching as they advanced.

Pouchot had sent runners to Little Fort Niagara, a small stockade at the upper end of the portage, and to other French posts to the south and west, calling for aid. He directed the reinforcements to proceed down the west side of the river but they ignored this order and marched boldly from the Falls down the east side. The reinforcements consisted of 1,400 French soldiers and Indians.

Sir William Johnson's Iroquois scouts anticipated this move and the English engaged the marching columns of French and Indian allies just within the present village limits of Youngstown. The engagement was short and severe. The French were scattered in every direction and many made prisoners, while many more met sterner fate.

The battle was called La Belle Famille, and it marked the beginning of the end of French rule in America. Pouchot's reinforcements ineffective, he was forced to surrender. With customary honors the garrison of 607 soldiers, eleven officers and their ladies marched out of Fort Niagara as prisoners of war. The English marched in—and a new era in America was begun.

A New Era

With the fall of Fort Niagara, the French had lost the stronghold key to their vast western territory. While trade for some time had been slowly slipping away from the French because the Indians could strike better bargains with the English, the loss of Fort Niagara meant that western

commerce would be almost entirely controlled by its new occupants, the English, under Sir William Johnson.

General Prideaux had fallen the victim of a premature explosion of one of his own cannon during the siege of Fort Niagara and Sir William Johnson had succeeded in command before the time of the French capitulation.

Just what direct effect this exchange of the fortification may have had in determining the destinies of western United States and Canada, is a matter of opinion among historians, though most students of the subject declare it to have been of great significance. Recently a famous barrister stated: "the Battle of La Belle Famille determined whether or not the Niagara Frontier and that vast territory once known as Louisiana should continue under the absolute monarchism of France or the more democratic government of England, under which colonization was much more practical."

Be this as it may, there is little doubt that Sir William Johnson, as first English Commander, made much constructive history for the Niagara Frontier and the countryside for hundreds of miles in every direction. For a number of years he had been Commissioner of Indian Affairs for his home government and his name was a password in Iroquois circles.

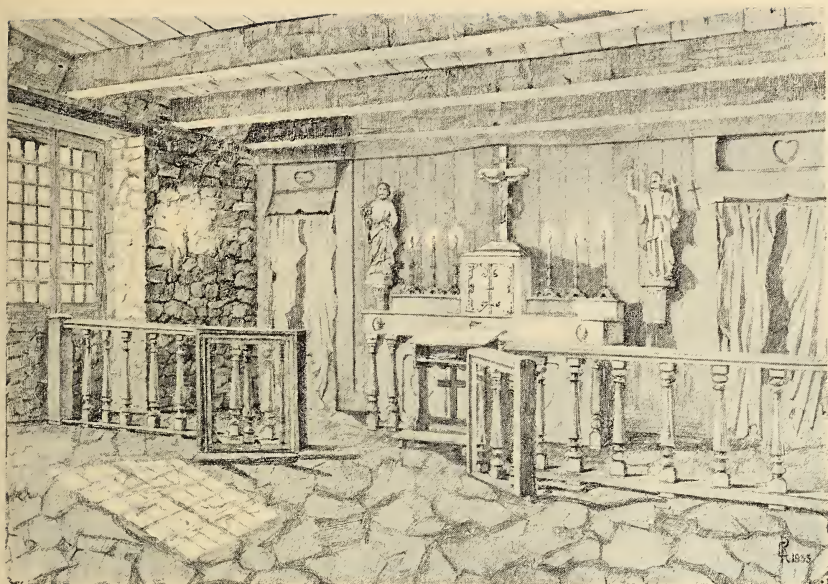
Under Sir William Johnson, Fort Niagara became the center of commercial, social and political endeavor more than ever before. Sir William was at once the soldier, the diplomat, the jurist and the trader. While he spent a great part of his time in this period following 1759 at Johnstown, N. Y., his real headquarters were at Niagara. It was from Fort Niagara that he reached out with his predominating personality and held the Indian tribes under his influence. It was from Niagara that he ruled half of America.

Devil's Hole Massacre

It was not without wholesale sacrifice that Sir William Johnson was to make inroads in the fur trade and improve conditions on the Niagara Frontier in the period following the capture of Fort Niagara.

In the fall of 1763, Pontiac—an Indian Chief—set up a conspiracy to recapture Fort Niagara for his French allies. This plan never materialized, but the schemer did manage to do considerable damage to the English on September 14 of that year.

Little Fort Niagara, the French post at the upper end of the portage, had been destroyed upon French evacuation and had been rebuilt by the English as Fort Schlosser. Under the French, the Seneca Indians had been hired to



Jesuit Chapel, the "Castle"

carry the portage trade upon their backs. Sir William Johnson, as a first step in improving conditions on the portage, had built a wagon road so that merchandise might be hauled by teams of horses and oxen.

As the first wagon train was halfway on its trip from Fort Schlosser to the lower landing, in the vicinity of what is known as the Devil's Hole (the edge of the Niagara Gorge at the present north line of the City of Niagara Falls) 500 Seneca Indians, under the influence of Pontiac, ambushed the drivers and their escort.

With the first volley, many members of the wagon train party fell. Most of those remaining were finished with tomahawk and scalping knife. Many plunged to death over the side of the gorge. A few escaped. John Stedman, who had charge of the portage and who was mounted upon a fast horse, and a drummer boy by the name of Matthews, have gone down in history as two survivors. The drummer boy fell over the cliff and lodged in a tree-top, later making his way to Fort Niagara. He lived in Queenston, Ont., until he reached the ripe old age of 94 years.

A party at the lower landing (now Lewiston) heard the firing up the river and set out to investigate. They too, were ambushed and most of them killed.

This was a daring step on the part of the Indians and it left them with grave doubts as to what Johnson might have to say about it. Fearing revenge, the Senecas in April 1764 sent 400 men to Sir William asking for peace. The wise diplomat realized the fallacy of asking life for life of these men who had died at the Devil's Hole and so he determined that the Senecas should pay in land for their indiscretion.

Johnson Treaties

Pontiac's conspiracy had alarmed the English—the Indian leader having been so successful in the Devil's Hole Massacre—and Sir William Johnson set about to build up safeguards against the recurrence of such an act.

In payment of the Devil's Hole outrage, the Senecas deeded a strip of land, two miles from either shore of the Niagara River and extending from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie, to the English government. The islands of the river they deeded to Sir William, but he immediately turned them over to the State.

It was to ratify this treaty, which had other provisions, and to insure peace, that Sir William sent messages to all Indian tribes for hundreds of miles, north, east, south and west, who wished to make peace with the English to come to Fort Niagara. The message was backed up by means of a force of arms under General Bradstreet, numbering 1,200 troops.

In July, 1764, they came: Red men, representing tribes from Nova Scotia to the Mississippi, and from the north and from the south, came 2,060 strong to make peace with England, with Sir William Johnson.

Never in the annals of the Red men, had such a representative group of Indians gathered. Their wigwam camps stretched for miles around.

The late Hon. Peter A. Porter writes of this meeting: "Many reasons had induced this great assemblage of Indians. Some came to make peace because the aid expected from the French had not been forthcoming; some because they were tired of war; some because they needed clothing, ammunition, etc., and could get them no other way; some by an early admission to avert retribution for past offenses; some came as spies, and some, no doubt, because they knew that at such a time 'fire water' would be easily obtainable."

At first the Senecas did not come. There was reason to believe that they had not intended to keep their treaty and therefore stayed away. Word was sent that if they did not appear at once at the Fort, the army stationed

there would march upon their villages and destroy them. At once a large body of Senecas appeared upon the scene.

Sir William went about the work of making treaty, not with the whole group at once, but tribe at a time, cutting his cloth to fit the individual, as he alone understood each case.

When the great council was over, Sir William had effected the most remarkable treaty in history. It took all the diplomacy and the shrewdness at Sir William's command to preserve order among the Indians. On one or two occasions shots were fired at members of the garrison, but in the famous Old Council Chamber, treaty after treaty was ratified.

According to Mr. Porter's works, the cost of this Indian congress was 25,000 pounds New York currency, or about \$10,000 for provisions, and 38,000 pounds sterling, or \$190,000 for presents to the Indians.

Niagara During Revolution

Histories of the same incident are sometimes widely different in their treatment, according to the predisposition of the author. We will recognize that this is particularly so in the many versions of Fort Niagara history during the American Revolution. The old post was at that time, of course, in the hands of the English, and we find the names of Col. John Butler, Molly Brant, Col. Guy Johnson and Chief Brant or Thyenega—as his Indian name is given—closely associated with this period. By patriotic writers of the cause of the United Colonies these characters are sometimes referred to in most uncomplimentary terms; descendants of the English patriots during this troublesome time are prone to describe the same leaders as kindly and humanitarian under trying circumstances.

Records show definitely that time after time the various commanders of the Fort protested to their home government against the use of uncontrollable Indian warriors against the Colonists—but without effect. Other records indicate that English officers and their families did much to alleviate suffering among unfortunate prisoners. In any event, the use of Indian forces by Fort Niagara commanders was at the orders of those "higher up."

It was at Fort Niagara that those terrible English-Indian expeditions to Cherry Valley and Wyoming Valley were planned. It was from Fort Niagara that many more such war parties set out to pillage and burn, to kill and to capture. It was back to Fort Niagara that they returned with prisoners, men, women and children; with scalps to account for those who had fallen during a surprise attack or along the rough trail to the Fort. The Indians

were paid for these scalps and in many cases were awarded their captives as slaves.

So terrible did this menace become that General Washington, realizing the demoralizing effect of the massacres upon the frontier settlers, sent one of his most able officers, General John Sullivan, to curb the Indian trouble. General Sullivan marched up through New York State, engaging the Indians here and there along the way and destroying every village in his path. He finally reached the Genesee River, 84 miles from Fort Niagara. In his official report of this expedition, General Sullivan stated that lack of 15 days' additional rations kept him from coming on and storming Fort Niagara, which he was confident he could have captured. His work was effective, however, for it stopped in a large measure the activities of the Indians.

The Fort was a retreat for English loyalists and roving Indians throughout the war and for many years thereafter.

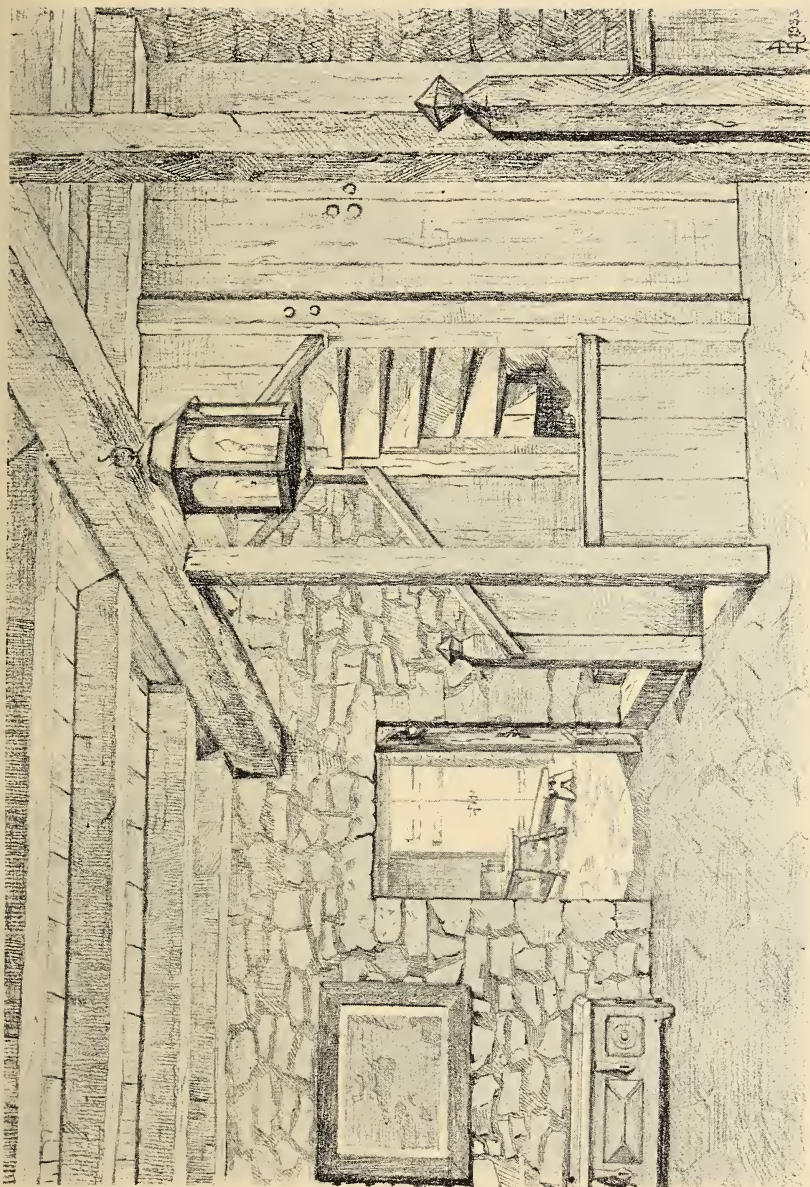
Holdover Period

Fort Niagara technically became the property of the United Colonies by the Treaty of Paris following the American Revolution in 1783, but the English military continued to hold the fortification and so to control the commerce of the river for thirteen years, until 1796, when the Fort was officially turned over to a small detachment of artillerymen of the United States Army. These thirteen years are known to historians as the "hold-over" which term is self-explanatory.

Much has been written of this period between 1783 and 1796 in the history of many other fortifications, as well as Old Fort Niagara, along the present American-Canadian border. There was the lingering hope in British circles that the border between the British colonies and the United Colonies would be much to the south and to the east of that which finally obtained.

England had another problem—of safely evacuating from the colonies her colonial citizens who had remained loyal throughout the American Revolution. It is variously estimated that between 5,000 and 8,000 loyal British subjects passed from the various eastern and southern colonies through Fort Niagara to safety on Canadian soil.

Until after the American Revolution there was comparatively little settlement on the Niagara Frontier. Niagara rather had been the main portage place—truly the key to all the west, and still it was not a settle-



Officers' Deck, the "Castle"

ment. Under the English régime, the Empire Loyalists rapidly began to settle on what is now the Canadian side of the Frontier and the Village of Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the Village of Queenston came into being. Fort Niagara as a center for succor, for police protection and all law and order, served during this period as a supply base from which to settle the fertile territory along the river and stretching eastward and westward above and below the escarpment. Newark assumed the proportions of the most important village in Upper Canada and there on the 17th of September, 1792, John Graves Simcoe, first Governor of Upper Canada established the first parliament.

Pioneer Life

We shall take the liberty of quoting from a very rare pamphlet written by Chipman P. Turner, entitled, "The Pioneer Period of Western New York," and published by Bigelow Brothers, Buffalo printers, in 1888. Mr. Turner's word picture of the pioneer is, in part, as follows:

"It is winter that introduces a real, not an ideal or fictitious, view. The pioneer, the fall preceding, obtained his 'article,' or had his land 'booked' to him, to build a rude loghouse; cold winter comes upon him before its completion and freezes the ground, so that he cannot mix the straw and mortar for his stick chimney, and that is dispensed with. He nevertheless has taken possession of his new home. The oxen that are browsing with the cow and three sheep; the two pigs and three fowls that his young wife is feeding from her folded apron; these, with a bed, two chairs, a pot and kettle, and a few indispensable articles for housekeeping, few and scanty altogether, as may be supposed, for all were brought in upon that ox-sled through an underbrushed road; these constitute the bulk of his worldly wealth. The opening in the woods is that which has been made to get logs for his house and browse his cattle for the few days in which he has been the occupant of his new home. He has a rousing fire; logs are piled up against his rude chimney back; his firewood convenient and plenty . . .

"The task before him is a formidable one, but he has a strong arm and a stout heart—he will yet sit down there with his companion of long years of toil and endurance; age will have come upon them, but success and competence will have crowned their efforts. They are destined to be the founders of a settlement and of a family—helpers in a work of progress and improvement such as has few parallels in an age and country distinguished for enterprise and perseverance."

War of 1812

A scene of peace and plenty around Fort Niagara was disturbed by that grim agent of man—war—in 1812, sometimes called the second war for independence. For years the American soldiers at Fort Niagara and the English at Fort George had built up a personal friendship by common meeting in the Village of Newark and many are the tales of happy gatherings among the people and the military of the surrounding countryside.

A pretty story is told in a brief history of Fort Niagara, written by the late Miss Janet Carnochan of Niagara-on-the-Lake. It relates that General Brock (English officer killed at the Battle of Queenston Heights) on the Sunday preceding the hostilities, was bidding good-bye to some American officers from Fort Niagara, who had come to service at St. Mark's Church in Newark. The General kissed two little girls of Dr. West, Niagara's Post Surgeon, saying, "Good-bye, my little rosy checked girls. The next time we meet it may be as enemies." So are the fortunes of war.

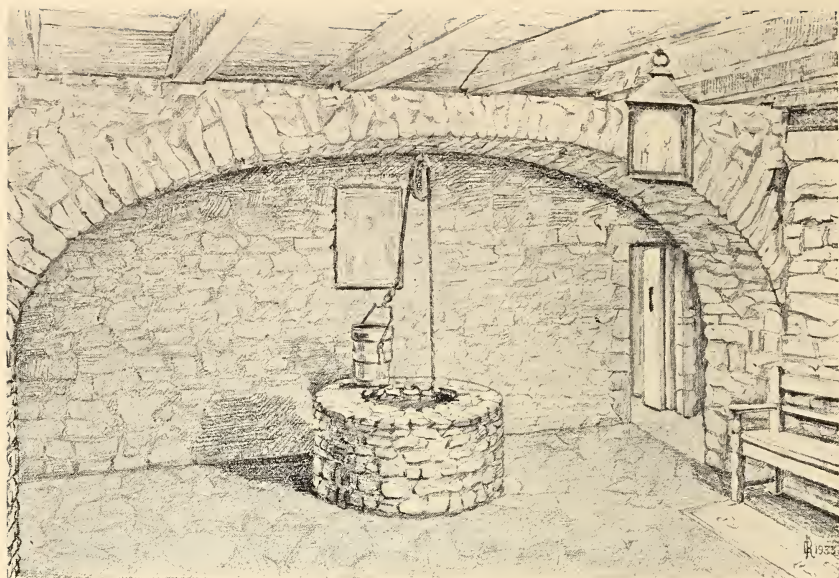
General Van Rensselaer, Fort Niagara Commander, planned the occupation of Queenston Heights as the first step in the war along the border. The balance of troops from Fort Niagara were sent to Lewiston to participate in this engagement. During their absence the English at Fort George, near Newark, bombarded Fort Niagara and nearly took it.

In rallying his men to recapture Queenston Heights General Brock was killed. On the day of his funeral, General Van Rensselaer issued orders that during the services minute guns should be fired from Fort Niagara "as a mark of respect due to a brave enemy."

There followed bombardment back and forth between Fort Niagara and Fort George with resulting damage to both forts, but no development of great moment.

In the spring of 1813, the American forces moved against Fort George and took it, holding it until December of that year. Word came that the British regulars, with Indian reinforcements, were advancing on Fort George. Under War Department orders, General McClure, commanding the American forces, burned the Village of Newark, spiked the guns of Fort George and withdrew to Fort Niagara.

Revenge for the burning of Newark was the first consideration of the English as they returned to the abandoned but serviceable Fort George. The British had no trouble in capturing Fort Niagara. There followed the wholesale burning of the Niagara Frontier, from Lewiston to Buffalo. The British had their revenge—a countryside in ashes, homes gone, families



"Castle" Vestibule with Haunted Well

scattered. The British held Fort Niagara until the end of the war.

In 1815 the Treaty of Ghent was signed and the Fort reverted to the United States.

Rush-Bagot Treaty

Soon thereafter in 1817, was negotiated one of the greatest international agreements known to mankind. Though it consisted of but a few short paragraphs which contained no high-sounding diplomatic phraseology, and though the subject dealt with such simple things as small gunboats, the Rush-Bagot Treaty has cast a ray of light over the world and has demonstrated conclusively that more than 3,500 miles of international boundary can remain at peace without the mounting of a gun. Following is the Treaty:

"Whereas an arrangement was entered into in the city of Washington, in the month of April, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen, between Richard Rush, Esq., at that time acting as Secretary for the Department of State of the United States, and the right honorable Charles Bagot, His Britannic Majesty's envoy extraordinary and minister

plenipotentiary, for and in behalf of His Britannic Majesty; which arrangement is in words following to wit:

“The naval force to be maintained upon the American Lakes, by His Majesty and the Government of the United States, shall henceforth be confined to the following vessels on each side, that is:—

“On Lake Ontario, to one vessel, not exceeding one hundred tons burden, and armed with one eighteen pound cannon.

“On the upper Lakes, to two vessels, not exceeding like burden each armed with like force.

“On the waters of Lake Champlain, to one vessel, not exceeding like burden and armed with like force.

“All other armed vessels on these lakes shall forthwith be dismantled and no other vessels of war shall be built or armed.

“If either party should be hereafter desirous of annulling this stipulation, and should give notice to that effect to the other party, it shall cease to be binding after the expiration of six months from date of such notice.

“The naval force so to be limited shall be restricted to such services as will in no respect interfere with the proper duties of the armed vessels of the other party.

“And whereas the Senate of the United States have approved of the said arrangement and recommended that it should be carried into effect; the same having also received the sanction of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, acting in the name and on behalf of his Britannic Majesty;

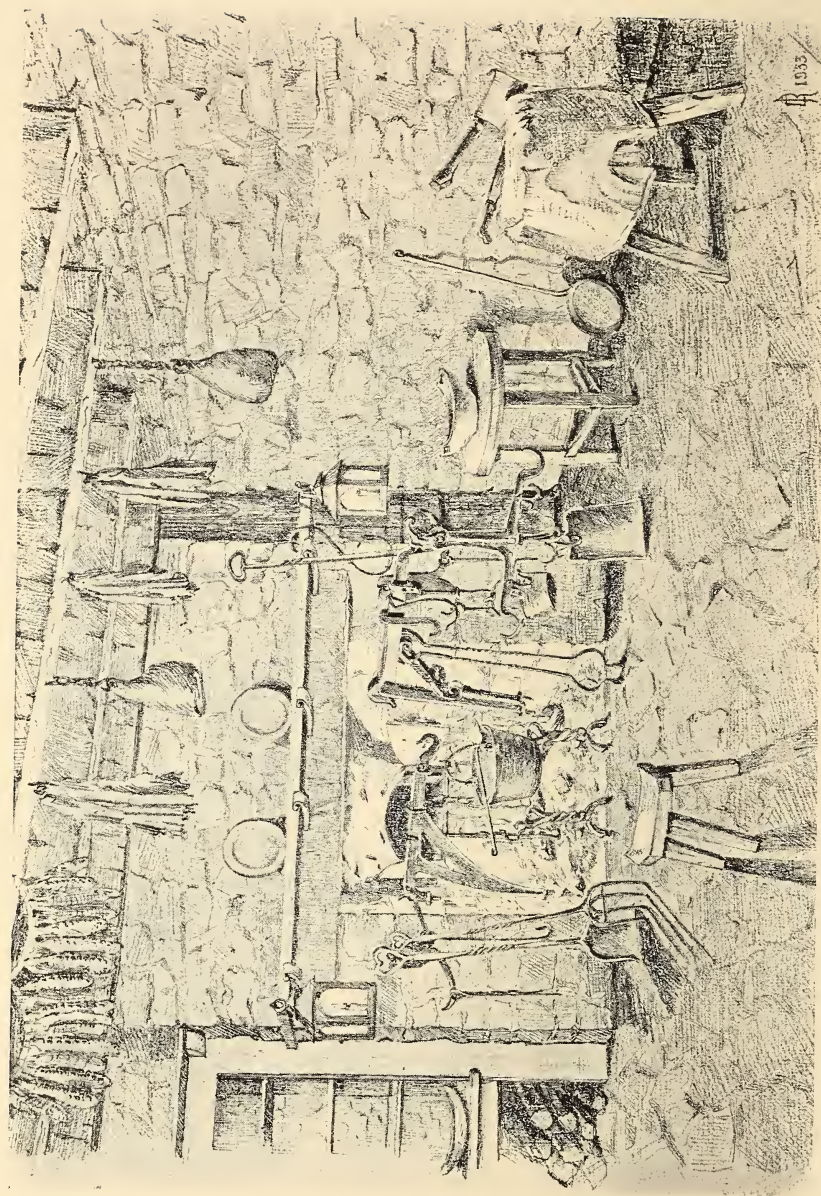
“Now, therefore, I, James Monroe, President of the United States, do, by this my Proclamation, make known and declare that the arrangements aforesaid, and every stipulation thereof, has been duly entered into, concluded and confirmed, and is of full force and effect.

“Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, this twenty-eighth of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighteen and of the independence of the United States the forty-second.

“BY THE PRESIDENT

JAMES MONROE

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, *Secretary of State.*”



"Boulangerie," French Military Kitchen

“The Harvest of Their Vision”



THOUGH but seldom in the past 200 years has the sun been set to rest at Fort Niagara without the bugle call, those clarion notes since 1815 have been but echoes of the glorious past. It is just an ancient landmark with a wealth of significant history and the one remaining symbol of Niagara's early pioneer days.

Gradually the Old Fort was abandoned as military quarters, the garrison moving into the new buildings erected from time to time to the south, and now comprising a modern Fort Niagara, which is used for the training of troops.

In times of emergency, however, the old buildings of ancient Fort Niagara have been pressed into service for the housing of troops and supplies. The Old Castle has been used for such purposes as recently as during the World War.

We have discussed the ancient triangle, where the Old Fort stands, from the time before white man had placed foot in the virgin forests on the banks of the Niagara until the present day. It has been the scene of many contests; of religious and social reformation, of dark horrors of Indian warfare and political imprisonment, and the center of a commerce without parallel in its day. It has been the scene of peace.

We have followed the period of French, English and American occupation. We have tried to visualize the significance of the ascendancy of the English more than 150 years ago, to point out the commercial and political importance of the Old Fort. We have called attention to the part the Old Fort has played in the initial steps toward formulating a great commerce.

All of this historical fact from which we form our individual opinions and prejudices, is only the reflection of the lives and characters of those whose acts brought about the series of circumstances with which we have had to deal. Men of France, men of England and men of America, each in turn, have served well under their respective flags at Old Fort Niagara. Each in his turn has contributed in one way or another to the happy state of affairs which we know today.

Perhaps the writer can best express his thoughts in this connection by the relation of a few lines of verse which came to him as he stopped beneath the old Lombardy poplar trees which have stood in the Old Fort for two hundred years:

To stand beneath these silent Lombardies,
The sentries of the passing centuries;
To gaze far out, across the azure deep
In quiet communion with them as they keep
Their endless vigil o'er this sacred soil;
To live with them again the tragedies,
The hopes, the fears, the gallant victories
That marked the tireless pace of those who sleep,
Who lived and fought and died—that we might reap
The harvest of their vision and their toil.

Old Fort Niagara has been restored and is preserved as a lasting symbol to remind us of that price which was paid in struggle and strife, in life and in death, to create our America. With infinite care those responsible for the work have searched the archives of three nations that the restoration might properly and adequately represent fact. The Old Fort Niagara Association, representative of all the patriotic and civic societies on the Frontier and thousands of private citizens who made the restoration possible, is dedicated to the preservation of the Old Fort as a symbolic shrine, and historical institute.

Today over the ancient parade ground float the flags of three great nations, the blue field and three golden Fleurs-de-lis that René Robert Cavelier de La Salle carried to the old triangle; the blue field with the red and white crosses of St. George and St. Andrew, carried here by Prideaux and Johnson, and the stars and stripes with fifteen bars and fifteen stars, the American flag of 1796, first American standard to fly over Fort Niagara.

Theirs is the glory—the heritage ours.

